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**TESTIMONY**  
**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,**  
**PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE**

**ON**

**“LEVERAGING MUTUAL AID FOR EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE”**

**THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2007**

**Introduction**

Thank you Chairman Cuellar, Ranking Member Dent, and distinguished members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide you with a statement for the record on our nation's preparedness. I am Ken Murphy, the President of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and the Director of Oregon Emergency Management. In my statement, I am representing the NEMA, whose members are the state directors of emergency management in the states, territories, and the District of Columbia. I was named to my current position in 2003, after serving with the agency since July 1999. Previous experience includes over nineteen years of service with U.S. Army as an active duty Guard/Reserve Officer.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify before your Committee today on the role of the mutual aid in disaster response. Through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), NEMA's members are the leaders in state-to-state mutual aid facilitation and continuously working to improve the system based on lessons learned from previous disasters. During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, EMAC fulfilled over 2,174 missions with 49 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico providing assistance in the form of 65,919 civilian and military personnel and equipment assets to support the impacted states. The estimated costs of this assistance exceeds \$829 million. Today, all fifty states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and most recently Guam are parties to the EMAC agreement. Most recently, assets and personnel were

used to fight the California wildfires through the EMAC system. In 2007, EMAC was the vehicle used to provide assistance for the Colorado, Nebraska, and Virginia winter storms; the Kansas tornadoes and floods; and Hurricane Dean in Texas.

There are several key areas that I wish to discuss with you today to address our mutual aid system:

1. EMAC as the tool for mutual aid before, during, and after disasters to support response and recovery;
2. EMAC's work plan for improving and building on the lessons learned from the largest mobilization in the program's history; and
3. Enhancing EMAC with strong Congressional support and Administrative coordination.

### **BUILDING OUR NATION'S MUTUAL AID SYSTEM THROUGH EMAC**

The EMAC response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita resulted in the largest deployment of interstate mutual aid in the nation's history. As mentioned previously, EMAC deployed personnel and equipment comprised of multiple disciplines from all member states to respond to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Texas. The process enabled National Guard, search and rescue teams, incident management teams, emergency operations center support, building inspectors, law enforcement personnel, health and medical and other disciplines to immediately assist the requesting states in need of support. The National Guard even chose to continue their response through EMAC when deployed under Title 32 because of the organization, liability protections, accountability, and tracking abilities EMAC provides. EMAC works, especially when deploying resources in teams and task forces with an established command and control structure, as established by the requesting state. EMAC connects the operational dots across state lines during a disaster.

EMAC was created in 1993 after Hurricane Andrew by then-Florida Governor Lawton Chiles. The system was developed through the member states of the Southern Governors' Association to establish mechanisms to enable mutual aid among member states in emergency situations. The Southern Regional Emergency Management Assistance Compact (SREMAC) was signed by participating Governors in 1993. Following recognition of SREMAC's nationwide applicability by the National Governors' Association and FEMA, Congress enacted EMAC in 1996 (P.L. 104-321). EMAC requires member states to have an implementation plan and to follow procedures outlined in the

EMAC Operations Manual. EMAC takes care of issues such as reimbursement, liability protections, and workers' compensation issues.

Prior to the historic 2005 deployments for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, EMAC's largest previous deployment was during the 2004 Hurricane season in Florida, Alabama, and West Virginia, during which time 38 states provided assistance in the form of more than \$15 million in human, military, and equipment assets and over 800 personnel to support the impacted states for over 85 days of continuous response operations. EMAC experienced significant growth and development as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. On 9/11/2001, only 28 states were a party to EMAC. That number quickly grew, as states saw the need to have mutual aid in place to respond to a catastrophic disaster and other emergencies and as a means to assist impacted states.

The key to EMAC is that the system provides assistance to those in need, but allows others to assist and learn from disasters in other states. The framework to effectively manage resources from all levels of government is defined in community, county, state, and federal response plans. The plans pre-identify local, state, and federal agency role and responsibilities so that blended resources from all levels of government meet the mission. Resource management is an area that a state impacted by a disaster can rely upon EMAC assistance for to ensure appropriate resources are brought to bear before, during and after a disaster. The only pre-requisite is verbal, followed up by a signed Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation in the requesting state and appropriate paperwork such as the REQ-A. This means not only bringing in equipment, but emergency management personnel to backfill and assist impacted communities when a disaster occurs. The system prevents self-deployment, allows for states to get the most cost effective and swiftest assistance, and allows for a Governor to call back assets if need be. EMAC partners such as the Fire Chiefs and Major Cities Chiefs utilize EMAC to move personnel and resources through the state – there is no other vehicle that ensures reimbursement, liability, and workers' compensation.

EMAC has a strong state organizational structure and commonly accepted protocols. EMAC is not a federal program, but a state developed and state program. Each year, the day-to-day business operations for EMAC is assigned to an elected EMAC Executive Task Force Chair. Iowa currently serves in this capacity. Additionally, each Region elects a lead EMAC State Representative to serve

on the Executive Task Force. NEMA also maintains an EMAC Committee comprised of state emergency management directors who give overall policy guidance and direction for the compact. NEMA also maintains the staff to coordinate the program.

EMAC has also developed in 2004 Model Intrastate Mutual Aid Legislation to provide a tool for states to use on mutual aid within their states. Fourteen states have adopted this model to date. EMAC has also developed a model contract for states to use when utilizing local government employees under EMAC.

### **EMAC IMPROVEMENTS AS A RESULT OF LESSONS LEARNED**

NEMA is the administrator of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). The state-to-state mutual aid system was referenced as a key achievement and best practice to be built upon in many of the reports on Hurricane Katrina. EMAC is not a perfect system but strives to achieve continuous improvement. NEMA's members are proud of the success of the system and support initiatives to bolster operational response and elevate awareness of how EMAC works. EMAC has a strategic plan to put lessons learned into practice. The After-Action process from Hurricane Katrina allowed EMAC to examine how to improve the system after unprecedented disasters and an unparalleled growth in the use of the system. I would like to highlight just some of the significant improvements we have put into place in the last two years as a result of what we have learned from Hurricane Katrina.

- First, since education on EMAC among all levels of government was identified as a key need, NEMA has established an EMAC Advisory Group that is already working to better integrate mutual aid partners into the EMAC system before future disasters occur and to educate partners. The EMAC Advisory Group has already met four times to discuss common issues such as resource typing, developing mission packages, and deployment issues for future disasters. The group includes representatives from state and local government associations, the National Guard Bureau, emergency responder associations, public utility associations, and the private sector. The discussions and interactions of this group will serve to assist in adding

local government assets to the scope of resources and other disciplines that can be readily plugged into the system.

- Second, EMAC has hired a full-time training coordinator whose main job will be to provide training for states as well as our local mutual aid partners. Multi-discipline, standardized training modules will be developed and delivered through distance learning programs and face-to-face instruction. A national training needs assessment for EMAC will drive the development of curriculum and a cadre of qualified trainers will be maintained through this initiative. Additionally, the training curriculum will include an exercise component which will help to facilitate the further integration of EMAC in federal, state, and local plans and exercises
- Third, NEMA has evolved in the area of EMAC resource tracking and management. In the coming months, we will fully implement an online REQ-A form to allow for swifter approvals from the requesting and responding states, which will ultimately allow for improved tracking and faster response to requests for assistance.
- Finally, states are engaged in developing their own deployable mission ready packages and EMAC is involved in assisting with responsibilities set in both the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act and the Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act for resource typing and credentialing.

States we are better prepared to address disasters through exercises and coordination with surrounding states and interagency partners to exercise the EMAC agreement. One example of how this is being put into practice is North Carolina's 2006 initiative with the National Guard and the State Medical Assistance Team Program (SMAT) medical assets that led to the development of mission ready packages. These teams are resource typed, so a requesting state knows exactly what they are getting when they request specific typed teams. From these team developments, North Carolina learned and was able to share with the various emergency support functions: that resources need to be mission ready for emergency management to broker at the state level; resources and systems should be understood in advance of a disaster to assist each other; resources need to be appropriately allocated

using EMAC as the vehicle; planning must occur together across disciplines to develop standardized mission ready packages; and relationships must be developed in advance of the disaster. Other states including Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama have built on these developments of the medical resource capability.

## **ENHANCING EMAC WITH FEDERAL INVESTMENT**

The support of EMAC is critical to helping offset the costs of disasters and building costly infrastructure at the federal level that could sit unused until a disaster occurs. In order to meet the ever-growing need for and reliance on interstate mutual aid, NEMA is seeking \$4 million over three years to continue to build EMAC capabilities. This funding will allow EMAC to focus on the implementation of lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, such as training and education for all mutual aid stakeholders, resource typing and credentialing, and information and resource management. Since EMAC's inception in 1993, EMAC was funded by member states until 2003. In 2003 with the second 9/11 supplemental, FEMA funded EMAC with a 3 year grant of \$2.1 million. This funding expired on May 31, 2007. EMAC is currently operating with a \$1,005,000 grant for this fiscal year. Funding is being used to continue to build and enhance EMAC capabilities through further development of the EMAC Operations system. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank FEMA for their financial support of EMAC. Their support helped us to make the strides that allowed the compact to respond so effectively to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. EMAC works in conjunction and coordination with the federal resource management systems so that resource allocations are optimized. Both systems need to be employed during large disasters, without making one system a replacement or subservient of another

While homeland security grants and Emergency Management Performance Grants are helping to build capabilities, the National Homeland Security Strategy counts on the fact that mutual aid is going to be put to use in a disaster. Specific Funding for EMAC is needed to continue to build capabilities and sustain the EMAC system at appropriate readiness levels for 24/7 activation when a disaster occurs. The Post-Katrina FEMA Reform Act authorized \$4 million annually for EMAC, but no funds were appropriated. NEMA supports inclusion of an annual budget line item in FEMA to assist with training and education, resource typing requirements in the FY 2007 DHS appropriations, credentialing, and information and resource management. Including a budget line item for building EMAC capabilities

and our nation's mutual aid system in the DHS budget for FY 2008 and beyond will help to build and sustain our nation's interstate mutual aid system. We hope we can count on this Committee, which drafted the initial language authorizing EMAC, to support funding in the appropriations process.

Additionally, EMAC faces other challenges. EMAC must maintain a significant partnership with the federal government in order to work. In that respect, I will be meeting with the FEMA Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness later this month to continue to build the EMAC and FEMA partnership. We have to ensure that as changes are made in the federal and state governments and in any change of Administration that EMAC continues to be recognized as an effective system for mutual aid and disaster response. .

## **CONCLUSION**

We appreciate Congress' attention and focus on mutual aid. We must ensure that our mutual aid system has adequate resources to build plans and systems before a disaster. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of NEMA.